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ABSTRACT

The history of American education is incomplete. This problem is the result of (1) historical scholars being influenced more by concerns of their own time than by issues of the past, (2) the belief that what is written and said about education is an acceptable representation of what education is, (3) the assumption that educational leaders are spokesmen for the entire educational enterprise, and (4) the presumption that the history of education is solely the history of how education has been imparted. These misconceptions have led educational historiographers to largely ignore accounts of students, parents, and teachers throughout the history of American education. Experiences of the silent majority, or common individuals, should be researched to provide a more complete perspective. Sources of such information include diaries, personal letters, personal papers, and slave narratives. However, this approach presents problems because personal literature is vast, difficult to locate and work with, and may contain bias. Nevertheless, historical research on education should consult these sources in order to identify patterns to be explored through statistical analysis and to help interpret relationships that appear in the statistical data of current research. (AV)

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DISTORTION IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF AMERICAN EDUCATION: THE PROBLEM OF SILENCE*

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In a survey of the recent literature in the history of education, published in 1977 in Volume IV of the Review of Research in Education, I took pains to include doctoral dissertations as well as published books and journal articles.[1] I argued that dissertations suggest important facts about a research field and where it is going. Not only do the better dissertations provide a preview of coming articles and books, but together they indicate the interests and preoccupations of those who influence historical understanding not by what they, themselves, publish but by what they teach to prospective historians of education and to other students in schools and colleges of education. The stability and conservatism of a field may be charted, as well as its revision.

Insight into emerging trends in a discipline may also be gotten by studying the annual program of scholarly and professional meetings. The

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[1]In Lee S. Shulman (Ed.), The Review of Research in Education, Vol. IV. (Itasca, Ill,: Peacock Publishers - American Educational Research Association, 1977). Pp. 210-267.

author of a 1974 dissertation on school development in Boston before Horace Mann remarks thus on the 1968 AERA symposium on "Urban Education: Needs and Opportunities for Further Research:"[2]

> These AERA papers reflected the sense of urgency and optimism of a new breed of educational historian. Theirs would be a history that would go beyond the official celebration of the march of education and democracy. Their sympathies would not be with school professionals and enlightened humanitarian leaders but instead with the poor and powerless. It would be a useful history that would highlight the cycles and continuities which bound the contemporary crisis of American education with its urban past. Their task for the immediate future would be nothing less than the forging of a comprehensive urban model of American educational history.

An urban model for the historiography of American education did emerge, demonstrated not only by the case studies of individual cities but by David Tyack's influential synthesis, The One Best System.[3] The urban model introduces an urban bias, assuming that America is a nation of cities and that public schooling originated and developed in an insistent urban context even when most Americans were not urban dwellers.

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[2]William Michael Weber, BEFORE HORACE MANN: ELITES AND BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1800-1822. Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Education), Harvard University, 1974, pp. 117-118.

[3]Marvin F. Lazerson, The Origins of the Urban School: Public Education in Massachusetts, 1870-1915 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971); Stanley Schultz, The Culture Factory: Boston Public Schooling, 1784-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Carl F. Kaestle, The Evolution of an Urban School System: New York City, 1750-1850 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); David B. Tyack, The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974); Diane K. Ravitch, The Great School Wars: New York City, 1805-1973 (New York: Basic Books, 1974); Selwyn K. Troen, The Public and the Schools: Shaping the St. Louis System, 1838-1920 (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1975).

The sarcastic reations of Jesse Lemisch to the program booklet of the 1974 meeting of the American Historical Association will illustrate the direction of my remarks about bias at this afternoon's session. Lemisch asked himself:[4]

> What New Directions, what New Trends, would be on display...? Would Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Daniel J. Boorstin be giving papers criticizing Left historians for letting their politics get in the way of their scholarship? Would Marxist heavies be attacking me for my premature espousal of "history from the bottom up"? ... what evidence was there in the program that the Historical Enterprise, as I like to call it, had advanced in the year 1974?
>
> Session 105 sent my already overloaded heart into an exquisitely arrhythmical pounding: "New Trends in Historical Editing," to be chaired by the executive director of the National Historical Publications Commission! And the papers were to be ab.. Blacks and Women!! Great Hera, I thought, falling through a large hole in my worn-out Huey P. Newton fanback cane chair, the 'sixties were not for nought: vencimos!!! And yet, my sensitive antennae seemed to detect a special message in the paper titles: "The Papers of Distinguished Black Americans," "The Papers of Distinguished American Women." To move into these areas, even if belatedly, was all to the good; but the focus was still, as it had been in the past, on the great and distinguished, seeming to exclude those who were not great, not distinguished.

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[4] Jesse Lemisch, "The Papers of a Few Great Black Men and Few Great White Women," The Maryland Historian, 6,(1975): 60.

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If written history is to be something other than what Voltaire once described it -- "a set of tricks played by the living upon the dead" -- then historians and their audiences must be aware of two sets of facts about the historian's product. First there is the fact that the historian "knows" better and lives more easily in his own present than in another's past. Hence, historical scholarship may tell us as much about historians and their own times as about the period which they are attempting to recreate. The personal experiences of the historian may introduce whole new subjects and approaches, as when historians of Southern and Eastern European lineage began to write immigration history.[5] The movement of women and racial minorities closer to the mainstream of the history profession will have important repercussions for political and economic, as well as social and cultural, historiography. Much of today's history of education is written, consciously or unconsciously, out of disappointment with contemporary American public education, especially with urban schools. Add to this such "presentist" influences as the civil rights movement and its after effects, the women's movement, anti-war protest, the reassertion of a vigorous social science on the American political Left,[6] and the appeal of sociological functionalism. It is for such reasons that Marc Bloch once remarked that "the past is, by definition, a datum which nothing in the future will change. But the knowledge of the past is something progressive which is constantly transforming and perfecting itself." However much I flinch at the optimism of Bloch's usage of "progressive" and "perfecting,"

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[5] John Higham (Ed.), The Reconstruction of American History (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

[6] See, for example, Irwin Unger, "The New Left and American History: Some Recent Trends in U.S. Historiography," American Historical Review, LXXII (July, 1967): 1237-1263.

his characterization of historiography as always subject to revising, partly under the influence of the present, is rather widely understood by historians, if not by their lay readership.

A second fact about historical scholarship which deserves attention is that it is shaped both by what is included and what is excluded; if you will, distortion and bias are introduced by errors of commission and by errors of omission. The products of historical research depend upon judgments, ordinarily implicit, "about what is, could be, or should be known. They entail definitions of the area, purpose and value of study."[7] Areas of investigation and of neglect in historical research are created and perpetuated by its reigning assumptions. In the historiography of education these include three related assumptions that have the status of operational principles; all are, in my view, substantially invalid and responsible for glaring omissions in the historical record.

What is thought and written and said about education is an acceptable representation of what education is and does. This first assumption is so patently absurd, when so baldly stated, that it may be surprising that education has been so long satisfied with its dominance by intellectual history. Even before intellectual history came into its present popularity -- mostly following World War II and challenging the reign of political, diplomatic, and military treatment -- the history of education was primarily the history of educational thought. Yet, as Berthoff has succinctly stated it, "Although the ideas of a particular epoch, as part of the reality of that time, can never be left out of the account, they seldom serve as an adequate or accurate picture of that reality itself; if it were otherwise, the world would have little need

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[7]Harold Silver, "Aspects of Neglect: The Strange Case of Victorian Popular Education," Oxford Review of Education, 3(1977): 57.

for new interpretations of historians. ...taking a fresh look at the humbler but fundamental history of the society that first gave rise to those ideas."[8] Even new fields of historical investigations, such as women's history, can become skewed in their interpretations by looking overly-long at what has been thought about gender. The nineteenth-century's prescriptive literature concerning women does not disclose, except by indirection, the discrepancies between what "society" (i.e., certain men) expected of women and women's actual behavior.[9]

When Barbara Finkelstein studied a large sample of the pedagogical literature of nineteenth-century America, she found that the most detailed treatments "...revolved not around the efforts of the typical nineteenth-century pedagogue, but around the thought and work of pedagogical pioneers here and abroad."[10] To have relied upon this literature to understand teacher behavior would have been to have fallen victim to the second assumption of educational historiography: <u>The leaders, the proclaimed "spokesmen" of education are, in fact, the spokesmen of the educational enterprise</u>. These spokesmen frequently turn out to be university presidents, state superintendents, big-city school administrators, organizational activists, chairmen of national committees and commissions, and other extraordinary individuals. Historians are like many social scientists in their willingness to draw conclusions about

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[8] Rowland Berthoff, "The American Social Order: A Conservative Hypothesis," <u>The American Historical Review</u>, LXV (April 1960): 496.

[9] "By concentrating on what women actually did rather than how they have been defined, historians have found that women acted in more varied ways than the stereotypes suggest and that they exercised considerable autonomy." In Barbara Sicherman, "Review Essay: American History," <u>Signs</u>, 1 (1975-76): 470.

[10] Barbara Joan Finkelstein, GOVERNING THE YOUNG: TEACHER BEHAVIOR IN AMERICAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS, 1820-1880, A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1970, p. 5.

social realities by analyzing data from the minority at the top. The history of labor is drawn from the papers of union leaders, church history from the bishops, the history of medical education from Welch and Flexner. Lemisch comments on the contention that publishing the papers of distinguished Black Americans is a form of "history from the bottom up" since ordinary folk wrote letters to Black leaders: This is, he writes,

> ...somewhat like suggesting to someone doing research on George Washington that he or she would find much material on him in seamen's diaries; we might call this a kind of trickle-up theory, and it would make no more sense than the complementary trickle-down theory. I acknowledge of course that the relationship between Black elite and Black masses has generally been closer than that between white elite and white masses. But when it comes down to it, ...the way to study the Black masses is to study the Black masses.[11]

The way to learn about popular attitudes toward education is not primarily to study the records of school-board members and newspaper editorials. The way to learn about teachers' values and actions is not primarily to read Catharine Beecher or Henry Barnard or, even, Margaret Haley.

The history of education is solely or essentially the history of dispensing or imparting education. This is a third presumption shaping the historiography. It means that pedagogical movements, curricular additions and rearrangements,

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[11] Lemisch, op.cit, p. 64. See also Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up." In Barton J. Bernstein (Ed.), Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History (New York: Random House, 1968). pp. 3-45.

proliferating legislation, and policy formation have dominated the field. Writing of English historiography, Harold Silver observes that "relevance to twentieth-century historians of the nineteenth century has meant ... a preoccupation with the state:"[12]

> Attempts to explain our modern, industrial, state-ordered society have been uppermost in their historical consciousness. [N]ot ... to detract from efforts to understand the growth and importance of the role of government and the state ... the fact is that historians have tended to close their eyes to features of social change that have not seemed "relevant" to these efforts. Historians of education have used the modern industrial state as a touchstone of relevance.

While liberal historiography has tended to treat the dispensers of education, especially of public schooling, as the deliverers of opportunity, radical and romantic historiography conceive them the imposers and controllers. In either case, education is something "DONE TO OTHERS, rather than something SOUGHT AFTER AND GAINED by people."[13] Historians of education treat people, as Maxine Greene has commented, "as either problems for the educators, beneficiaries of others' idealism or enlightenment, or (abstractly) as reservoirs of democratic possibilities."[14] The pronounced disposition to place educational history in the context of impersonal social forces and such mass movements as

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[12]Harold Silver, "Nothing But the Present or Nothing But the Past?" Pamphlet, 1977, pp. 10-11. Courtesy of Professor Sol Cohen.

[13]Patricia T. Rooke, "From Pollyanna to Jeremiah - Recent Interpretations of American Educational History," Journal of Educational Thought, 9 (April 1975): 27.

[14]Maxine Greene, The Subjective and the Common: A Perspective on the New History. Unpublished paper, presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Minneapolis, March 1970. Page 5.

modernization, bureaucratization, and professionalization further diminishes the persons whose experience is the stuff of history. Yet, "those who teach and those who learn are actors in their own right, irreducible to institutional imperatives and systemic roles;" why not, then, "begin with the assumption that careful attention to the behavior and consciousness of groups and individuals is the proper starting point of the construction of new generalizations?"[15] Why not, indeed!

Women's studies and ethnic studies are signs of a more inclusive effort, something clearly evident by the later 1960s. Historiography began to be peopled by the "inarticulate," the "under-classes," the "oppressed." History is becoming an important factor in the consciousness-raising which has marked group life. A new interest in family experience and the effects of family on educational and occupational success followed the research of James Coleman and Christopher Jencks, Writing the history of childhood has something to do with comtemporaneous studies by lawyers of children's rights and by philosophers of the ethics of child-adult relations.[16] The histories of childhood and family life also indicate something else: an extension of the historian's subject matter from the "public" to the "private" spheres -- where ordinary and unexceptional individuals live their lives and speak their minds.

More than thirty years ago, historians like Caroline Ware and Theodore Blegin urged that the small and everyday elements of ordinary life be recovered

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[15] John R. Gillis, "Toward a Social History of Education," History of Education Quarterly, 17 (1977): 92.

[16] Carl F. Kaestle, Recent Methodological Developments in the History of American Education. Draft of a script for a taped lecture for the American Educational Research Association, n.d., p. 8.

historically, so that larger movements might be understood.[17] When historians responded at all positively, the problems of sampling the "invisible" and getting the "inarticulate" to speak were cited. Despite collections of historical essays like Tamara Hareven's Anonymous Americans,[18] there is hardly anything in educational historiography that is "history at the grass roots." What Harold Silver writes of English historiography can be extended to the American:[19]

> The canon of published literature and the majority of unpublished research seemed (a) top heavy, in that it was concerned (and even then selectively) with the provision and administration of education; (b) empty, in that it made few serious attempts to look at the content of schooling or other educational processes; (c) one-dimensional, in that it made no attempt to consider the impact of schooling, and responses to it (or even the range of resistances to it); (d) isolated, in that it made no convincing attempt to explore links between school and family, school and work, school and recreation, school and politics, school and community (though some formal relationships, notably that between school and church, have, of course, been widely studied; (e) purblind, in that it recognized only limited areas of "education" as being suitable for investigation.

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[17] Caroline F. Ware (Ed.), The Cultural Approach to History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), pp. 8-11; Theodore C. Blegin, Grass Roots History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1947).

[18] Tamara K. Hareven (Ed.), Anonymous Americans: Explorations in Nineteenth-Century Social History (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971).

[19] Silver, "Aspects of Neglect...," op.cit. pp. 59-60.

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Robert Louis Stevenson claimed that "The cruellest lies are often told in silence."[20] Consider the silence (or relative silence) of educational historiography -- just as it focuses on schooling -- as emcompassing these kinds: There is its silence about educational experience and schooling's outcomes or effects. There is its silence about the concerns and agendas of those who are the agents of institutionalized education. And there is its silence about the patrons, clients, and consumers of education. These omissions do more than leave incomplete the historical account; they probably warp it as well -- with, as yet, unknown consequences for informing public policy on education.

The Neglect of Experience As one historical era has succeeded another, more of the socialization of youth reportedly takes place in the confines of the classroom and its associated spaces; that confining youth in the school accelerated the historical creation of a subculture of youth has become something of a truism -- but in the absence of much demonstration of the process. Sociologists tell us there is a distinctive "school culture", as well as subcultures of students and adults, of girl students and boy students, of teachers and administrators. As yet, historians have not applied these concepts as they have other theoretical constructs from social science. There are no histories of classrooms, of which I am aware, and school and college histories (institutional histories) say virtually nothing in a systematic and analytical way about life in schools, or about the range of interactions of school experience with family experience and religious experience, with ethnicity, gender, social class, or community. Historians have assumed that policy promotes practice but have barely begun to perceive how

[20] Robert Louis Stevenson, Virginibus Puerisque (London: Kegan Paul, 1881), p. 81.

practice might affect policy -- as in the case of policy on enforcing compulsory school attendance laws.

The majority of children who experienced schooling in the nineteenth century did so in rural and village schools. In 1800, 6% of the population of the United States lived in communities defined as urban; by 1900 that proportion approached 40%. Throughout the century, however, the largest number of communities designated as urban had populations of under 5,000.[21] Indeed, as the population axis moved west and south -- with the settling of Kansas, Illinois, Oklahoma, the Wisconsin and Oregon territories -- it is possible to conjecture that more Americans lived more relentlessly isolated rural lives than had been the case in compact and village-oriented colonial New England. While Massachusetts in the mid-nineteenth century may not be representative of other regions or of the century as a whole, data analyzed by Kaestle and Vinovskis show the children of rural residents achieving consistently higher school attendance rates than did urban children.[22] If educational history writ large was being made by an emerging urban school model and in the most urbanized and industrialized states, it is nonetheless very probable that most nineteenth-century Americans had their personal school histories shaped by rural life and rural values. That the greatest proportion of American teachers taught first, or exclusively, in rural schools seems certain. A bias against urban life was expressed by many vocal educators born in the nineteenth century.

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[21] "Urban" has been variously defined by the Census. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), pp. 8, 9, 14.

[22] Carl F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovskis, "From Fireside to Factory: School Entry and School Leaving in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts." In Tamara K. Hareven (Ed.), Transitions: Family Cycle and Life Course in Historical Perspective (New York - forthcoming). The appeal of country life is indicated in the following article: William A. Bullough, "'It is Better to be a Country Boy': The Lure of the Country in Urban Education in the Gilded Age," The Historian, 35 (February 1973): 183-195.

More attention to the documents of human experience may challenge, at least for the period before 1870 or so, the urban-education thesis that is already beginning to wilt a bit. Local histories that look at neglected periods, such as the early nineteenth century tend to show more widespread school activity than once was believed to exist, and sometimes important changes. Thus, Weber found in Boston, in the period 1800 to 1820 -- "a time not particularly noted for its urban growth or social reform" -- a significant enlargement of common schooling by the opening of public schools to females, blacks, and poor whites. He finds the causes less connected with the uniqueness of urban life, and more dependent upon the presence and individual actions of educational elites.[23] Local elites, often a handful of individuals, emerge again and again in the personal-history literature as school promoters and decision makers.

The Omission of 'the workers' The story of schooling is not just that of the promoters and decision makers, but also of teachers and students, of those who sent their children and those who did not. Each group undoubtedly had a related but different view of its meaning and consequences, and their sometimes varying perspectives on the educational past need identification and airing. In the historiography, the silence of teachers' voices is particularly striking.[24] Pedagogical theory and popular conceptions of teacher qualifications saw the person of the teacher as the critical element

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[23] Weber, BEFORE HORACE MANN, op.cit., pp. 119-124. See, also Mary Gordon, UNION WITH A VIRTUOUS PAST: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL REFORM IN MASSACHUSETTS, 1789-1837. Unpublished doctoral dissertation (history), University of Pittsburgh, 1974

[24] An extensive discussion of the neglect of teachers is found in Geraldine Clifford, "Saints, Sinners, and People: A Position Paper on the Historiography of American Education," History of Education Quarterly, XV (Fall 1975): 257-272.

in colonial and republican American schooling. But the historiography ignores them as people and, when it considers teachers at all, treats them as stereotypes: ineffective men and passive and rather pitiful spinsters,[25] dragged reluctantly into semi-professional status by the vigor and imagination of a professionalized élite. A teacher is "promoted into the history of education if he (rarely she) had been promoted out of the classroom by a subsequent and "more relevant" career as administrator, lecturer on education, author of schoolbooks, system-builder, or educational journalist.

Teachers have long been the agents of public school systems, charged with translating often vaguely-stated educational objectives into the habits of mind and action of their students, which the times called developing "virtuous and responsible character." In the first three centuries of American educational experience, teachers were also the initiators and carriers of a system of entrepreneurial schooling which made literate, and somewhat sophisticated and skilled, millions of Americans: by advertizing their willingness to take in pupils, by outfitting a school and rounding up subscribers, by foregoing a living wage to keep afloat an unendowed and debt-ridden college. If "bureaucratization" of education is today much-decried, even by teacher organizations, there is some

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[25] Married women, living with their husbands, were more frequently working as teachers than is commonly thought. In the later colonial South, such women ordinarily opened subscription ("select") schools. See Julia Cherry Spruill, Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938), especially Chapter XII.

In the public schools, as well, married women were often able to teach. Sometimes a woman returned to teaching because of economic stress. Such was the case of Mrs. Emilie Conine Dorsey, who had taught prior to her marriage in 1850. With a two-year old child and an ill husband she returned to teaching near Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1854: "John's health is poor and I fear is like to remain so. This is the evil wind which blew me again into the school room. You know we have the school house under our nose. I am to have $48 for 12 weeks work." E.C.D. to Silas and Mary Ann Conine Seymour, March 28, 1854. In "The Connie Family Letters, 1852-1863: 'Just Think How We Are Scattered,'" Indiana Magazine of History, 70 (June 1974): 122-178.

reason to think that their predecessors in the nation's classrooms might have welcomed it. Bureaucracy would have spared them the painful, anxious experience so commonly revealed in the voluminous teacher-authored personal literature of the nineteenth-century: that of trying to collect the agreed-upon payment for their services. I have argued elsewhere that the low pay and peripatetic nature of teaching itself enhanced the spread of schooling.[26]

Recent local studies, primarily of northeastern cities, report that schooling was not strongly correlated with occupational and social mobility much before the present century.[27] This generalization would have to be qualified if these historians had looked at teachers as workers -- i.e., if they had looked at women's work. Enrolling in the teaching force represented upward social mobility for quite large numbers of Americans since the early nineteenth century. Women teachers as wage earners frequently contributed to education as a growth industry by using their wages to buy further schooling for themselves and augment family income to permit additional schooling for their siblings.[28] The rather early

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[26] Geraldine Jonçich Clifford, "Home and School in 19th Century America; Some Personal-History Reports from the United States," History of Education Quarterly, XVIII (Spring 1978): 3-34, especially pp. 13-14, 27.

[27] Stephan Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century City (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964) and The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); Howard M. Gitelman, Workingmen of Waltham: Mobility in American Urban Industrial Development, 1850-1890. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

[28] A study of working-class families in Manchester, New Hampshire in the early twentieth century found that daughters employed in factories contributed a larger proportion (95%) of their earnings to their families than did sons (83%). In Tamara K. Hareven, "Family Time and Industrial Time: Family and Work in a Planned Corporation Town," Journal of Urban History, 1 (May 1975): 365-389.

appearance of women from working-class and immigrant backgrounds as public-school teachers should also be examined as a check upon the facile assumption that factors of class and ethnicity alienated many Americans from the growing public-school sector.

In 1922, Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. predicted that the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment would lead to a recasting of historiography: "From reading history textbooks, one would think half our population made only a negligible contribution to history...."[29] That teachers have not peopled the history of education is partly a consequence of the fact that women quickly come to numerical preponderance in the new public-school systems of most regions of the United States. Contemporary feminism, and the "new social history," are now producing an historiography of women that seeks a balanced perspective, rejecting both the excesses of the "woman as victim" schema (the "oppression model") and of the sentimentalization of women's experiences.[30]

A few historians of education are beginning to look at women teachers who extended their sphere -- as into work with the freedmen behind the Union lines (Jacqueline Jones) or into teacher organizing (Wayne Urban, Robert Reid). But women's consciousness could be changed radically merely by leaving the family circle and entering such "acceptable" female occupations as factory work, dress making, or teaching. Numerous teacher diaries and letters show a rising spirit of independence and, sometimes, contentiousness among the farmer's daughter turned schoolma'am. Twenty-year old Jane Conine, teaching in Perry, New York in 1855, wrote the following to a sister removed to Sauk County, Wisconsin:

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[29]Arthur Meier Schlesinger, New Viewpoints in American History (New York: Macmillan, 1922), p. 126.

[30]Stages in women's historiography are defined in Gerda Lerner, "Placing Women in History: Definitions and challenges," Feminist Studies, III (1975): 5-8. See, also, Sicherman, op.cit., p. 476.

> I intend to be differently situated if I live, & teach another season. I dont know whether the dis[trict] like me or not, & I dont care much. I do the best I can, & if they want to find falt the[y] may. (a privilege which people ingeneral improve.). I never felt so indipendent in any thing I ever attempted, as in teaching. They wanted me in our school, but I told them plainly that I never would attempt to govern children that were not governed at home. That is I would not go into such a school if I knew it but if I was once in, I presume I should usu[r]pe my authority. The second week of school, one of my little girls told me that her mother said, if I punished her she would take he[r] out I never had [met?] her dear ma but I ventured, to send her word to this effect, that I governed my own school, & further more if her children need punishing she might expect that they would get it. They are here today & I don't borrow any trouble about their future appearance.[31]

The unequal pay and limited career opportunities of female teachers, the arduous and frequently unfulfilling nature of their duties were often compensated for by the growing self-confidence, freedom, and opportunity to forge new life-long friendships and associations.[32] A spinster teacher group emerged

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[31] "The Conine Family Letters...,) op.cit., pp. 162-163. See, also, Clifford, "Home and School...," op.cit.;
Geraldine Jonçich Clifford, "History as Experience: The Uses of Personal-History Documents in the History of Education," History of Education [Great Britain], 7 (Fall 1978): 183-196, especially pp. 195-196; Richard M. Bernard and Maris A. Vinovskis, "The Female School Teacher in Antebellum America," Journal of Social History, (Spring 1977): 332-345.

[32] This theme is developed for women's history generally in Carroll Smith-Rosenberg "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relationships Between Women in Nineteenth Century America," Signs, 1(Autumn 1975): 1-29. For an example of female consciousness and peer-group solidarity at work see Thomas Dublin, "Women, Work, and Protest in the Early Lowell Mills: 'The Oppressing Hand of Avarice Would Enslave Us,'" Labor History 16 (Winter 1975): 99-116.

but so did a larger sense of sorority, a network of assistance in locating better teaching positions, and, perhaps, a yet to be described "teacher subculture"--something that might have given more shape to the pedagogical art than did the successive pedagogical theories with which earlier historians were long preoccupied.[33]

Omission of the Clients' Views Given the fact that the consumption of schooling was voluntary for the greater part of America's educational past, the elements going into the family's decision to provide or withhold schooling from children and youth are surprisingly little studied; only recently has this source of distortion begun to be remedied, largely by research that analyzes quantifiable data on school consumption patterns.[34] Qualitative sources--the personal-history literature--suggest the important role which siblings once played in the decision. This was to change, however, with lower mortality rates, smaller family size, the disappearance of the rate bill under fuller tax assumption of public school costs, and the growth of scholarship and loan arrangements in higher education. These, when added to the proliferation of legal, economic, and social compulsion of school attendance, together virtually eliminated the sibling role.

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[33]It can be argued that American pedagogical style was "softened" under the influence of the woman teacher--as happened to American religion in the nineteenth-century when stern Calvinism met its match with the intense involvement of women in religious movements. See Barbara Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion: 1800-1860." In Mary S. Hartman and Lois W. Banner (Eds). Clio's Consciousness Raised (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). Pp. 137-157.

[34]See Kaestle and Vinovskis, "From Fireside to Factory...," op. cit.; Michael B. Katz and Paul Mattingly (Eds.), Education and Social Change: Themes from Ontario's Past (New York: New York University Press, 1975).

Family motivations and expectations of education are undoubtedly complex and variable. While some parents framed choices by utilitarian values, others respond to factors of relative status or "conspicuous consumption." When Esther Dunn was a high school student in Portland, Maine in 1907, she recalled that[35]

> I took Greek and it was a great cross to me. No one I knew took Greek. There were four others in the class; three were sons of doctors and obviously were heading for the same profession. They would need Greek for medical terms and prescriptions. There was one girl besides myself, the daughter of a minister. She and I, with the sudden intimacy born of misery, compared notes on the first day. Her father had forced her to take Greek, too. Our common experience of parental tyranny made the predicament more bearable. ....
>
> While Father did not know Greek, he could not have lived in New England among lawyers and judges without feeling its prestige.

A commonplace presumption is that providing education is something the family does <u>for</u> its offspring. That schools might also have been something parents did <u>for themselves</u> should be considered--even though quite prosaic motivations are often buried in historical obscurity. Parents in early-modern England and France who sent their sons off to boarding schools were, according to school officials, also doing something for themselves: purchasing extended

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[35] Esther Cloudman Dunn, <u>Pursuit of Understanding: Autobiography of an Education</u> (New York: Macmillan, 1945), p. 49.

relief from their children's tiresome or troubling company. The faculty at pious Harvard complained of the same phenomenon in the later seventeenth century. More universally, and more important for the diffusion of public schooling, was the fact that the local district school offered daytime child care for nineteenth-century women whose domestic duties had not been appreciably lightened by the marvels of technology and invention. More women in households remained "producers" than became "consumers." Such an interpretation suggests a symbiotic relationship between home and school.

In a recent article, however, Carl Kaestle uses school records, especially school-committee reports, and educational tracts to reveal "constant contention" between home and school, family and teacher. Much of this conflict stemmed from disagreements over school discipline--school trustees and teachers attributing much of the need of discipline to parental neglect of good home training.[36] He appears to attribute the conflict as following immediately from two phenomena related to larger social change: first, the attempt to expand the teacher's authority into areas of parental privilege and, second, denigration of a body of parents whose class and ethnic attributes were thought to make them unfit properly to socialize their children. The frequency of school officials' complaints about parents and such other indirect evidence as the indifference of many parents to attending school exhibitions support his conclusions about parental resistance and a pronounced degree of antagonism that accompanied institutional divergence--with the school ultimately emerging triumphant as the society's chief instrumentality for the appropriate socialization of the young. My own research to date is primarily reliant upon letters and diaries. It reveals more

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[36]Carl F. Kaestle, "Social Change, Discipline, and the Common School in Early Nineteenth-Century America," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, IX (Summer 1978): 1-17.

consensus than conflict, and a greater personal overlap and identification of school functionaries (teachers and trustees) with community residents. We agree, however, on the powerful presence of shared goals and upon the fact that the family was not a "passive element in the history of education." Moreover, we concur in the need to open "a window on a world of family attitudes and behavior quite independent of child rearing literature and the opinions of professional educators."[37]

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[37] Kaestle, op. cit., p. 10.

iv

A recent article on womens' education prior to the Civil War contends that the failure to know the educational experience of most women is "due primarily to historians' reliance on literate sources such as diaries, personal letters, and the observations of contemporary writers...."[38] Except for the authors of biography, however, I would contend that diaries and personal letters have been woefully underutilized among the historian's bank of literary sources. There are, of course, some who would contend that, by current social science standards, all such material must be used only if it is in sufficient volumes to be quantified and treated statistically; it is otherwise, "memorabilia" and not historical source material. The recent visibility of "quanto-history" provoked E. P. Thompson to protest:[39]

> At a certain point one ceases to defend a certain view of history; one must defend history itself. A quantitative methodology must not be allowed to remain uncriticized which obliterates (as "literary" or as "atypical") whole categories of evidence.

As no more myself than an interested reader of quantitative studies of the history of education, I fall back upon the comforting words of Stephan Thernstrom, the most influential perhaps of the American practitioners of the new urban history of numbers and coefficients. Writing of descriptive materials, he argues

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[38]Maris A. Vinovskis and Richard M. Bernard, "Beyond Catharine Beecher: Female Education in the Antebellum Period," Signs, 3(Summer 1978): 856-857.

[39]E. P. Thompson, "History From Below," The (London) Times Literary Supplement, April 7, 1966, p. 280.

that they fulfill at least these functions: (1) providing information essential to arranging harder data in meaningful categories; (2) yielding hints of patterns to be explored through statistical analysis; and (3) assisting in the interpretation of relationships that appear in the statistical data by suggesting the underlying mechanisms.

> Most important, it is only through such evidence that the investigator may begin to understand the perceptions and emotions of the people he is dealing with. The austerely objective facts uncovered by empirical social research influence the course of history as they are filtered through the consciousness of obstinately subjective human beings. Religion, ideology, cultural traditions--these affected human behavior in the past and shaped the meaning of the demographic and ecological patterns which can be neatly plotted on a map or graph.[40]

Because they share a common interest in bringing the lives and times of the masses of ordinary people into the historian's consciousness, the quantifiers and the users of more subjective documents may indeed collaborate in potentially valuable ways; there might well already be models for future research in the history of education in the creative work of David Allmendinger, Carl Kaestle, and Maris Vinovskis. The easier enterprise will be that of broadening the historian's essentially literary approaches by including more diverse documents in the data base. Mary Cott, for example, tries to reproduce the lives and experiences of not-notable women of the early nineteenth century

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[40] Stephan Thernstrom, "Reflections on the New Urban History," Daedalus, 100 (1971): 371.

by adding one hundred diaries as well as personal correspondences to the more traditionally exploited normative literature of sermons, conduct books, and women's magazines.[41] Charlotte Erickson employs extracts from many individuals' previously-unpublished letters in Invisible Immigrants.[42] Slave narratives and black autobiographies are getting extensive use, and have generated reference aids and expanded the discussions of methodological issues.[43] One of the still-too infrequent uses of personal papers in the history of education is David Allmendinger's searching after the "silent people" of higher education, the students, and the effect of their presence upon their institutions, in Paupers and Scholars.[44] Historians, however, still underutilize autobiography and other personal-history writing, and most of the theoretical works and dissertations are being produced in departments of literature rather than history--and, least of all, by education department historians.

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[41] Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). James L. Roark uses the personal papers of 160 former slave owners "to capture reality as the planters knew it" in Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977).

[42] Charlotte Erickson, Invisible Immigrants: The Adaptation of English and Scottish Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century America (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1972).

[43] Stanley Feldstein, Once a Slave: The Slaves' View of Slavery (New York: William Morrow, 1971); Russell C. Brignano, Black Americans in Autobiography: An Annotated Bibliography of Autobiographies and Autobiographical Books Written Since the Civil War (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1974); Stephen Butterfield, Black Autobiography in America (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974); John Blassingame, "Black Autobiographies as History and Literature," The Black Scholar, 5(December 1973 - January 1974): 2-9, and "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems," The Journal of Southern History, 41 (May 1975): 473-492.

[44] David F. Allmendinger, Paupers and Scholars: The Transformation of Student Life in Nineteenth-Century New England (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975).

One concern of this symposium is identifying how the methods of the discipline shape the view of education which emerges from the research. Therefore, before concluding this brief on behalf of an unprecedented greater use of personal documents, three characteristics of this body of material must be mentioned. First, it is vast. Counting only that small part which is in print and the much greater part which remains in manuscript form and is accessible to the public in libraries and historical societies, is to speak of a reservoir in which many historians can be drowned. Second, it is difficult material to work with. Manuscripts are housed in hundreds of libraries, and to sample across regions is costly and time-consuming; to do less, however, is to perpetuate the pronounced Northeastern bias of the historiography of American education or to contribute strictly local or regional alternatives. The logistics of locating materials differ markedly from the archival research done to produce biography; names are essentially unimportant and identities immaterial, except that the research logic steers one away from spending much time with the papers of well-known persons. The standard reference works are not organized to enhance the feasibility of research on "anonymous Americans."[45] Whether using reference works or a library's own catalogue, such "locators" as "education" and "schooling" are inadequate to reach all of the dimensions of perspective, experience, and practice that are relevant to educational history. The subjects around which catalogues were traditionally built--political history, local history, biography, and genealogy-- do not facilitate doing such new social history as the history of childhood, women's history, ethnic relations, occupa-

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[45] William Mathews, American Diaries in Manuscript, 1580-1954: A Descriptive Bibliography (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974); National Uni Catalogue of Manuscript Collections (Washington, DC: The Library of Congres.)--a multi-volume and continuous publication; Louis Kaplan, A Bibliography of American Auotbiographies (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962).

tional life. To use the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota requires a working knowledge of several foreign languages. With manuscripts there are other difficulties inherent in the nature of the materials themselves: fragile, faded, often barely legible. They, like their counterparts in print, frequently have a high dross rate; stunning relevations and valuable information are often buried in stupifying trivia.

Third, while personal history documents do exist for a more broadly representative population than might be supposed, they do contain sampling biases of their own. Lawrence Veysey once remarked to me that autobiography be considered suspect because its authors might be drawn disproportionately from inordinately smug and self-satisfied individualists. If so, there remains a great amount of autobiographical writing in many diaries and journals, not intended to provide moral lessons to other readers. Local elites are far better represented, in print or in preserved manuscripts, than are persons at or near the bottom of the social and economic scale. People who were functionally illerate did not write letters, and those whose literacy was marginal wrote little beyond a few receipts, the vital statistics laboriously recorded in their Bibles , and a few letters--often composed in times of personal crisis. The growing body of demographic research on geographic mobility in the United States also demonstrates a positive correlation between stability of residence in a community and economic position as measured by taxes paid and property holdings. Local and regional historical societies, better able to gather the records of long-established residents and families, will better sample the more economically and socially secure as well. Nonetheless, sheer accident, fa ly relationships, and the desire to preserve the historical record of some social movement have together preserved elements of the experiences of many among the truly obscure and anonymous of the American past.

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A charge to the several symposia on "Values Imposed by the Disciplines..." is to explore how the conclusions of research might affect education: as by creating a particular view of education, or by limiting the usefulness of its knowledge for the formulation of educational policy and the guidance of educational practice.

With respect to historical research on education it has been claimed that liberal historiography produced a rosy view of American public education, that obscured its chronic failures and perpetuated an unjust system.[46] More recently it has been argued that radical and pessimistic conclusions drawn from revisionist historical research have undermined efforts to improve public education.[47] That a view of the eudcaitonal past can ramify beyond the historians' community is argued by Weber:[48]

> The belief in the flexibility of a pre-modern free educational market colors contemporary discussions about alternative futures for public schools. Proposals for educational vouchers and for a deschooled society rely upon images of an educational free market and beliefs about what growing up used to be like. If projections of the future are continuations of our sense of the past, then what in fact did happen makes a difference.

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[46] Colin Greer, The Great School Legend (New York: Basic Books, 1972).

[47] Diane Ravitch, The Revisionists Revised: A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools (New York: Basic Books, 1978), especially pp. 164-173.

[48] BEYOND HORACE MANN..., op. cit., p. 40.

On what bases can such attributions of influence to historiography be laid? Without intending to belittle the historian's efforts in the slightest, I admit myself profoundly unconvinced that the "lesson of history" -- whether it be optimistic or pessimistic, liberal or radical -- will cause or influence to be caused one or another kind of public policy respecting education. I base my skepticism upon two sets of observations: one specific to the enterprise of historical studies in education and the second to the effects of educational research writ large.

First is the limited range of direct exposure to the historiography of education. Doctoral studies in the history of education have never bulked large in American universities.[49] Advanced-degree students in other professional specializations in Education, are likely to encounter whatever exposure they get to historical fact and interpretation in some melange called social foundations of education. The same may be said of most first-degree or first-credential students; and, with the recent coming to domination of the crass anti-intellectualism of performance-based teacher education programs, their exposure to humanistic studies has virtually disappeared. Even the best historical monographs on educational history apparently do not penetrate very deeply into the larger historical profession, into American social science, or become the bed-time reading of the American power elite. Should historians' work become known and

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[49] A study of doctorates awarded in Education during the period 1956-1958 found the combined fields of history and philosophy of education ranked 18th in number of degrees, representing 2.8% of all Education doctorates. In Harold E. Moore et al., The Doctorate in Education (Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1960), p. 22. A questionnaire study of 63 universities projecting doctorates to be awarded in 1965, reported 50 to be awarded in history and philosophy, compared to 111 in educational psychology and 222 in school administration. In William H. Medlyn et al., Potential Doctorate Productivity in Selected Colleges and Universities, 1965 (Washington, DC: AACTE, 1965), p. 21. A more recent study did not list history of education as a field, but reported that doctorates in "social foundations" were about 2.4% of the 35,489 doctorates awarded in Education in the period 1971 through 1974-75. In Mary D. Ott, Analysis of Doctor's Degrees Awarded to Men and to Women 1970-71 Through 1974-75 (Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics, 1977), p. 15.

quoted, I think it is because it "fits" a prevailing or emerging view or policy imperative.

This brings me to my second set of reasons to doubt the influence of historical research in educational policy and practice. For AERA's Second Handbook of Research on Teaching, I attempted an historical analysis of the impact of educational research upon school practice across the curriculum.[50] More recently, for the National Academy of Education, I reconstructed an intensive case study of vocabulary research, which did influence educational thought, textbook construction, and pedagogy in a variety of school subjects.[51] If they did not convince others, these efforts convinced me, at least, that educational research ordinarily had little or no influence upon the behavior of educational practitioners or those who make policy for schools and that, where impact can be demonstrated, it is because of characteristics of the political or ideological or sociological context in which education is then operating more than the characteristics of the research itself. Knowledge, scientific or otherwise, is one among the lesser pressures operating upon that vast, costly, and alternately sensitive and resistant enterprise that is institutionalized education. Research is facilitated when the research substantiates existing opinion, confirms experience, or legitimates some already-agreed upon change.

This paper started with the proposition that a given piece of historical research often provides glimpses into the particular worries of the historian's own times. It concludes with the proposition that audience or readership reaction to historical research is also a gauge of the temper of the time.

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[50] Geraldine Jonçich Clifford, "A History of the Impact of Research on Teaching." In Robert M. W. Travers (Ed.), Second Handbook of Research on Teaching (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973). Pp. 1-46.

[51] Geraldine Jonçich Clifford, "Words for Schools: The Applications in Education of the Vocabulary Researches of Edward L. Thorndike." In Patrick Suppes (Ed.), Impact of Research on Education: Some Case Studies (Washington, DC: National Academy of Education, 1978). Pp. 107-198.